

January 9, 2018

Dear Members of Congress,

In this season of budget discussions, the faith community remains committed to protecting God's creation, addressing climate change and ensuring clean air, land, and water for our communities. We therefore maintain that funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a government entity charged with protecting God's creation and human health, and the Department of the Interior, charged with administering our nation's public lands, should remain robust.

We urge you to strengthen the recently proposed Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill so that sufficient investments are made in programs that protect human health and God's gift of land, air, water, and wildlife. The proposed cuts in the current draft undermine the missions of both the EPA and the Department of Interior.

The religious community has actively engaged for decades to protect God's gift of air, land and water. We have worked faithfully to shed light on how water pollution, land contamination, air pollution and climate change impact vulnerable populations like the elderly, communities of color, and low-income communities. As people of faith, we are working to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit an earth not impaired by climate change, air pollution or water pollution, and that we ourselves will not fall prey to these perils. We look to the Department of Interior and, in particular, the EPA to help us in this endeavor.

Because of EPA's past work under the Clean Air Act, 230,000 lives are saved each year, 2.4 million asthma attacks are prevented each year, and 22.4 million lost school or work days are prevented each year. Any proposed budgetary and staff/office reduction actions would directly undermine the EPA's mission and the progress we have made on clean air, clean water and climate change.

The Department of the Interior manages one-fifth of the land in the United States and 35,000 miles of coastline. And since 1916, the National Park Service, managed under the Department of the Interior, has been entrusted with the care of our national parks, special places that tell their unique cultural and ecological stories to 275 million visitors each year. These places—national parks and other public lands—are central to the health and wellbeing of our nation.

We were encouraged to see that proposed funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program, one of many important regional restoration programs, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund remains at its previous funding level. However, we maintain that programs that support the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and National Parks should not receive cuts. Policy riders that undercut bedrock environmental laws should also not be included in the Appropriations package.

We ask that Congress fully fund the EPA and insist that Administrator Pruitt uphold his obligation to shepherd the agency so that it fulfills its stated mission to protect the environment and human health. We also ask that Congress fully fund Department of the Interior and encourage Secretary Zinke to fulfill his mandate to protect public lands.

We ask that Congress fully fund the EPA and Department of the Interior so that both agencies can carry out their missions. Please strongly encourage Administrator Pruitt and Secretary Zinke to faithfully and diligently administer the duties of their offices that have been entrusted to them by the Senate on behalf of the people of the United States.

Sincerely,

Creation Justice Ministries

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Interfaith Power & Light

Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Maryknoll Sisters, Eastern Region, USA

Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team

Union for Reform Judaism

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society